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GEORGE BENNETT, M.D.,

F.R.C.S., F.L.S., F.Z.S., ETC.



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F.R.C.S., F.L.S., F.Z.S., ETC.

GEORGE BENNETT was born at Plymouth on the 31st of January, 1804. In 1819 he visited Ceylon, and in 1821 returned by way of the Mauritius (where he remained six months) to England, when he immediately entered into training for the Medical Profession. He studied for the first few years in Plymouth, and subsequently in London, both at the Middlesex Hospital and at the Windmill-street School, under CHARLES BELL, HERBERT MAYO, and CÆSAR HAWKINS. He became a Member of the Royal College of Surgeons in 1828, and was made a Fellow of the same Institution in 1859, in which year he also obtained the degree of M.D. of Glasgow University. After obtaining his medical status, he went on a voyage for scientific purposes, the result of which is laid down in various papers printed in the *Asiatic, United Service*, and *Medical and Physical Journals*, also in the *Medical Gazette*, *Loudon's Magazine of Natural History*, and other Scientific Journals. At this time also he published observations on the coniferous trees of New Zealand (February 6, 1832), in Lambert's Description of the Genus *Pinus*, and discovered a new Pine, a *Thuja*, named by the Maoris, *Kawaka*, which was described and figured by SIR WILLIAM HOOKER in the *London Journal of Botany* (Vol. 1, p. 570), 1842, under the name of *Thuja Doniana*. In the *Royal Institution Journal* for June, 1831, he published a paper with an engraving on "The mode of Preparing Heads amongst the New Zealanders," and in December of the same year, he was elected a Fellow of the Linnean Society of London. In 1831, also, he had contributed several papers to the *Mirror*, then edited by MR. TIMBS, and amongst these will be found the first published account (with an

engraving) of the monument to LA PÉROUSE at Botany, near Sydney. He was also the first to discover the animal of the Pearly Nautilus in a living state, and supplied his friend Professor OWEN with the then unique specimen which was so ably described by the latter in a memoir published by the Council of the Royal College of Surgeons of England in 1832. It had been found floating in the water, in Marakini or Dillon's Bay, Island of Erromanga, New Hebrides Group, on the 24th of August, 1829, and was on the point of sinking when captured.

In the *United Service Journal* for 1831, he published papers on several of the Polynesian Islands which he visited, viz., Rotuma, Tongatabu, and some of the New Hebrides Group. In the *Asiatic Journal* for 1831 and 1832, he published papers on the Islands of Erromanga and Tanna, New Hebrides Group, including also an account of the child ELAU, a native of Erromanga; this girl, the first of her race ever brought to England, arrived there in 1831, and died in Plymouth in 1834. In the same *Journal* he also published about this time other papers on Manilla (Philippine Islands), on the Pulowat Islands, (Caroline Group), and on the Polynesian dialects. In the *Medical Gazette* for 1831-32, he contributed a number of papers, among others being Notes on the Karaka tree (*Corynocarpus laevigata*), and on the Tutu or Tupakihi (*Coriaria sarmentosa*) or Wine Berry-tree, the Puredi (*Vitex littoralis*), and other New Zealand plants, with wood engravings by VIZETELLEY; also extracts from a *Journal of Natural History*, from England to New South Wales, Batavia, Sumatra, Singapore, &c., and Notes on the Practice of Medicine among the New Zealanders, and other of the Polynesian Islanders. To the *Medical and Physical Journal* for 1832, he contributed papers on the Kava, *Nauclea Gambir*, *Ignatia Amara*, and an account of the Intermittent Fever at the Island of Erromanga. In a magazine which had only an ephemeral existence, he gave Notes on the Island of Tahiti, 1831, and Notes on the Sandwich Islands, 1831. In *Loudon's Magazine of Natural History* (Vol. 5, 1832), he contributed papers on the Botany of Tahiti; Notices on the Native Plants of the Island of Rotuma; an account of the Ungka Ape of Sumatra (*Simia syndactyla*); an account of the

Sandalwood Tree, and observations on some of the plants of the Sandwich Islands.

In 1832, he revisited New South Wales, to investigate the habits and anatomy of the Monotremata and the Natural History generally of the colony. His observations on the *Ornithorhynchus* are of the greatest importance to science. After a visit to Java, Sumatra, Singapore, and China, he laid down his observations in his first complete work, *The Wanderings of a Naturalist in New South Wales, Batavia, Pedir Coast, Singapore and China*, 2 vols. 8vo., 1834, Bentley. In 1834, he was awarded the Honorary Gold Medal of the Royal College of Surgeons of England, for his discovery of the animal of the Pearly Nutilus, and for preparations illustrating the generation of the Kangaroo and *Ornithorhynchus*, both ably described by Professor OWEN in the *Transactions of the Royal Society* for 1834. He was elected a Corresponding Member of the Zoological Society of London in 1832, and a Fellow of the Society in 1858. He introduced into the Collection of the Society the first living specimens of the Mooruk or Morrup (*Casuarus Bennetti*), BENNETT's Cassowary from New Britain in 1857-58; the Kagu (*Rhinocetus jubatus*) from New Caledonia in 1862-63; the Tooth-billed Pigeon, or little Dodo (*Didunculus strigirostris*) in 1864; EYTON's Tree Duck (*Dendrocygna Eytoni*) in 1867; the New Caledonia Rail (*Ocydromus Lafresnayanus*) in 1869 and 1873; the Wood Hen Rail from Lord Howe's Island (*Ocydromus sylvestris*) in 1871; the Yellow Bellied Phalanger (*Belideus fluviventer*) in 1859; and also presented living specimens of the Ursine Dasyure, or Tasmanian Devil (*Dasyurus ursinus*) in 1869, and the Australian Bustard (*Eupodotes Australis*) in 1867. He was awarded the Silver Medal of the Society on May 7th, 1862.

Eventually he settled in New South Wales, and in 1836 commenced the practice of his profession in Sydney. He was constantly on the alert for fresh discoveries in Natural Science, and his liberality and energy in procuring new objects in order to make them known to the world, have been frequently and widely recognised. The Cassowary which bears his name, the *Didunculus*, and numerous other Zoological and Palæontological objects, to to which Professor OWEN, GOULD, SCLATER, and other eminent

naturalists, constantly refer in their works, show what a single liberal-minded man can accomplish, even though much occupied with an extensive medical practice. In 1835, shortly after his arrival in Sydney, he was appointed by the New South Wales Government to investigate the cause of the Epidemic Catarrh or Influenza, which at that time was prevalent in the colony among the sheep, destroying great numbers of valuable flocks. He sent in his report after a careful practical investigation which was printed and published by the Government in October, 1835.

He was the first Secretary of the Australian Museum Committee in 1836, having received the appointment to the Museum from the then Secretary of State for the Colonies. He published a Catalogue in 1837, and acted as Secretary till 1841, when he resigned that position; but in 1853, on the Incorporation of the Institution, he was appointed a Trustee, which position he held for over twenty years. He took an active part in the establishment of the Sydney School of Arts from 1838 to 1850, giving many Lectures on Zoology, and working as a member of the Committee, and Vice-President for many years. In 1837 he contributed papers on various subjects to a periodical called the *Literary News*, published by Tegg, but which was discontinued by the proprietor after the first volume; but during the whole of this period, his time was much occupied with his work, and it was not until 1859 that he was enabled to take a holiday, which he spent in making an extensive tour over Europe. It was at this time that he took the advantage of his presence in London to publish his *Gatherings of a Naturalist in Australasia*, 8vo., VAN VOORST, 1860. In the same year (1859) he was appointed an Associate and a Member of the Committee of the Biological Section of the British Association at Aberdeen, and held the same position at the subsequent meetings of the Section at Oxford in 1860, and Plymouth in 1877. In 1856, he was elected a Member of the Board of Examiners in the Faculty of Medicine in the Sydney University, and in 1859, the second volume of the *Phycologia Australica, or History of Australian Seaweeds* was dedicated to him by Professor HARVEY, and in the following year (1860) he received Diplomas from the Austrian Government as a Member of the Imperial Austrian Zoological and Botanical

Society. On the formation of an Acclimatisation Society in Sydney in 1861, he delivered (by request) a lecture on Acclimatisation and its adaptation to Australia. This Lecture was afterwards published by the Melbourne Acclimatisation Society, which sent 500 copies to the Sydney Society for distribution. Two years subsequently, in 1863, he was elected Honorary Secretary of the Acclimatisation Society, and this position he retained until the dissolution of the Society in 1871. About the close of the existence of the Society, a lengthy correspondence was carried on with the Indian Government on Silk Cultivation. The selected portions of the correspondence entitled *Correspondence relating to the Cultivation of Silk in New South Wales*, were published by the Government in 1870, and presented to the Houses of Parliament. A similar correspondence was about the same time carried on by Dr. BENNETT with the Government of Japan, through Mr. ADAMS, the Secretary of Her Majesty's Legation at Yokohama, from whom was obtained much important information, accompanied by specimens of silk, printed reports, and illustrative drawings of the native mode of culture, models of the apparatus used in silk-winding, &c., and a collection of choice eggs ; which were distributed among the Australian colonies. In 1864 he was elected a Member of the Imperial Society of Cherbourg, and a Corresponding Member of the Royal Society of Tasmania.

In 1871 he visited Queensland in search of Fossil Mammals and Reptiles, discovering many new specimens of great interest in the drifts. In a letter to Professor OWEN, he gave details of his journey, and his mode of search. This letter was published in full by Professor OWEN in the *Annals of Natural History* for April, 1872. In the *Sydney Mail* for the same year, Dr. BENNETT also published a series of illustrated articles, giving the results of his observations during this excursion. In the year following (1873) he received the Silver Medal of the Acclimatisation Society of Victoria, in recognition of the services which he had rendered to the cause of acclimatisation. And in 1874 he was appointed Honorary Consulting Physician to St. Vincent's Hospital in Sydney.

In 1877 he started on a journey to Europe, travelling through the United States and Canada, returning in 1879 by way of

Bombay and Ceylon. During this visit he was elected a Corresponding Member of the Literary and Philosophical Society of Liverpool in 1877, an Honorary Member of the Geographical Society of Rome in 1878, and a Fellow of the Royal Colonial Institute, and Honorary Corresponding Secretary in 1879. In the *Leisure Hour* for 1879 he also published Notes on a visit to Melbourne, Tasmania, and South Australia.

He acted as the Executive Commissioner representing the Ceylon Government at the Sydney International Exhibition of 1879-80. He has also contributed a number of papers to the *New South Wales Medical Gazette*, many others of his contributions are also to be found in the *Zoological Proceedings and Transactions*, *Journal of Botany*, *Gardener's Chronicle*, *Science Gossip*, *Lancet*, &c. In 1882 he was elected President of the New South Wales Zoological Society.

In 1888 he was elected President of the Natural History Association, and on its revision in 1891 was re-elected President, it being then re-named the Field Naturalists' Society of N.S.W. In this year he also presented to the Medical School (University of Sydney) a handsome stained glass window costing £140.

In December 1890 he was awarded by the Royal Society of New South Wales the Clarke Memorial Medal. This medal is awarded "for meritorious contributions to the Geology, Mineralogy, or Natural History of Australia to men of science, whether resident in Australia or elsewhere." The same year he bequeathed to the Sydney University the Ornithological works of the late JOHN GOULD, and complete sets to that date of *The Annals and Magazine of Natural History*, *The Journal of the Linnean Society*, *The Proceedings of the Zoological Society of London*, in addition to other valuable works such as *Horsfield's Zoological Researches in Japan* (the conjoint value of these amounting to over £2,000).

For the last ten years, beyond acting as co-examiner on Materia Medica and Therapeutics in the University of Sydney, subjects which always greatly interested him, he took but little active part in his profession; yet, though now advanced in age, his mental faculties were remarkably clear, remaining so almost to the last moment of his life.

He passed away on September 29th, 1893, at 167 William Street, Sydney, N.S.W., at the age of 89 years and 8 months.

His final resting place is in Section No. 2 of the Monumental Division of the Church of England Cemetery at the Necropolis, Rookwood, and is indicated by a handsome monument erected by his widow.

List of Specimens of Natural History named after Dr. GEORGE BENNETT :—

BOTANY.

PHANEROGAMS.

- Eupomatia Bennettii* : Von Müller ; Queensland.
Flindersia Bennettiana : Von Müller ; Queensland.
Mucuna Bennettii : Von Müller ; New Guinea.
Ficus Bennettii : Seemann ; South Sea Island.
Antiaris Bennettii : Seemann ; Tueopia, Fiji.

CRYPTOGAMS.

ALGÆ.

- Claudea Bennettiana* : Harvey ; Speetacle Island, Port Jackson.

ZOOLOGY.

MAMMALIA.

- Dendrolagus Bennettianus* : De Vis ; Queensland ; a tree Kangaroo.

REPTILIA.

- Notaden Bennettii* : Gunther ; Castlereagh River, N.S.W. ; *Bennett's Cross Toad*.
Diporophoron Bennettii : Gray ; N.W. Australia ; a Lizard.

AVES.

- Casuaris Bennettii* : Gould ; New Britain ; the *Moruk*.
Ægotholes Bennettii : Salvador ; New Guinea.

INSECTA.

- Eupholus Bennettii* : Gestro ; New Guinea.

MOLLUSCA.

- Helix Bennettii* : Brazier ; Ipswich, Queensland.
Goniodorus Bennettii : Angas ; Port Jackson, N.S.W.

PALÆONTOLOGY.

MARSUPIALIA.

- Diprotodon Bennettii* : Owen ; Mandoona, N.S.W.

LACERTILIA.

- Chlamydosaurus Bennettii* : Owen ; Gowrie Station, Darling Downs.

